

MECHANICAL MEMORIES MAGAZINE

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The only UK magazine dedicated to vintage coin-operated amusement machines

Mechanical Memories Magazine

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Published by: Antique Automatic Amusements

Editor: Jerry Chattenton

10 Bedford Road
Dartford DA1 1SR

☎ 07710 285360

e-mail jerry.mmm@tiscali.co.uk

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Editorial

Hello, and welcome back. So here we are at long last with the September magazine. I'm afraid it's taken some time to get back into harness with the magazine after the long summer break. Having been open at Brighton throughout the school holidays, there was a lot to catch up with once it was all over, the consequence of which is that the magazine is (as usual) late!

So how was Brighton? Well, not surprisingly, pretty dead thanks to the loony council's extortionate parking charges. However, they climbed-down a bit by introducing an additional tier of eight hours parking for £15. They then had the brass neck to proclaim that this would thus "provide an affordable family day out." Tossers! On what planet is £15 affordable just to park your car? Needless to say, I think my days at Brighton are numbered. I also think there will be a good number of other seafront businesses that won't be there next year.

On a brighter note, it was good to see quite a few of you who came down to see me at the arcade, including a few that I met for the first time. I even managed to get a new subscriber to the magazine. I'm sorry that I missed one collector who came down after the holidays were over. I think he may be a subscriber to the magazine, so if you're reading this, many thanks for the photographs you left with Graham – that is certainly a fine collection you have there!

Now, I announced in the June magazine that I had purchased the remaining stock of Nostalgic Machines Ltd., and that I intended setting up a website in order to make the spares available. Well, the site is now online, although it's not quite finished yet. All the Nostalgic spares are listed, but I do also hope to list other parts, which will include some of the spares I produced back in the '90s and also some original NOS parts. So please take a look – www.allwinspares.co.uk.

And finally, a reminder that the Coventry auction is just a couple of months away. Entry forms will be included with the October magazine, (which will hopefully be out in a couple of weeks) so please start thinking about your entries now, rather than leaving it to the last minute as usual!

Well that's it for now, until next month

All the best

Jerry

Dreamland

MARGATE

Save Dreamland Update September 2012

The big news story this summer came from Thanet District Council with the announcement on the 17th August 2012 that the Secretary of State approved the council's Compulsory Purchase Order served on Dreamland's current site owners, Margate Town Centre Regeneration Company Ltd., following the Public Inquiry earlier this year.

I am delighted that the Secretary of State has backed our plans to reopen Dreamland as a major seaside visitor attraction of regional and national significance. Along with our partners, Thanet District Council, we were confident that our plans would be found to be robust, deliverable and in the public interest.

The Trust was very pleased to support the council in its efforts to secure the site to enable us to implement our vision, which has been shown time and time again to be the development that the people of Thanet most want to see happen. I am very grateful to the council for believing in our project and putting its time and resources behind it. We have built a really great partnership on this project, and I am looking forward to working with TDC as we now move towards implementation.

The residents and businesses of Thanet, and its many existing and future visitors, have waited far too long for work on this project to start. The funding has largely been in place since 2009, and plans have been drawn up since around the same time. The news that the CPO has been confirmed by the Secretary of State is hopefully the final major hurdle that we will have to cross before we start work on site. This decision means that the entire Dreamland site can remain intact, covering essentially the same area of land it has done since it opened as Hall-by-the-Sea in the 1870s. Britain's oldest surviving seaside amusement park site will be a place of activity and excitement again.

The Dreamland Trust is ready to make a start on site and we hope to have Stage One of the project open by Easter 2014, subject to there being no legal challenge to the Secretary of State's decision. When we open, Dreamland will include the Stage One rides and attractions (not all of which have been publicly announced yet – so watch his space), an events area and car park, which between them will utilise the whole site.

Jan Leandro will be bringing forward a programme of events for next year, which should give people a taster of what is to come.

In the meantime we are working towards progressing the designs and interpretation to the final stages and looking forward to the start of the restoration work on the historic rides collection and the continued building of the Dreamland Archive.

This month sees the installation of the windows to the North East elevation of the Cinema, which are bespoke to Dreamland's Grade II* listed building and were installed under Thanet District Council's urgent works notice. Other urgent works, now complete, include new roof, repointing, the restoration of the rotunda window and reinstatement of the iconic fin sign.

In spite of delays, spirits are high and support remains strong.

Nick Laister

Nick Laister (Chairman, The Dreamland Trust)

Jan Leandro (Audience Development Officer)

www.dreamlandmargate.com

www.savedreamland.co.uk

Arcade Treasures

by **Bill Kurtz**

Today, a sense of nostalgia and the irresistible urge to play have combined to make arcade memorabilia and antique arcade games one of the hottest collectible fields of our time.

This book is filled with 447 colour photos of the greatest games ever to hit the arcade scene - the earliest arcades' strength testers and fortune tellers, perennial favourites like baseball games and SKEE-BALL, wild pinball games from the middle of the century, and modern electronic video game like PAC MAN and Q*BERT.

While American manufacturers have maintained a solid grip on the market, some interesting offerings are included from manufacturers of other countries. Also included are a section on novelty products, a detailed discussion of the development of different game trends, a history of significant manufacturers and designers, and a thorough price guide.

Kurtz shares tips on how to begin moving in the arcade trading circuit, how to locate your favourite games, and how to maintain and repair your collection. Beginning collectors and long-time fans alike will find Kurtz's information helpful. With its foreword by Sha-Na-Na's Screamin' Scott Simon this book is a must-read for anyone interested in the games of yesteryear-and of today!

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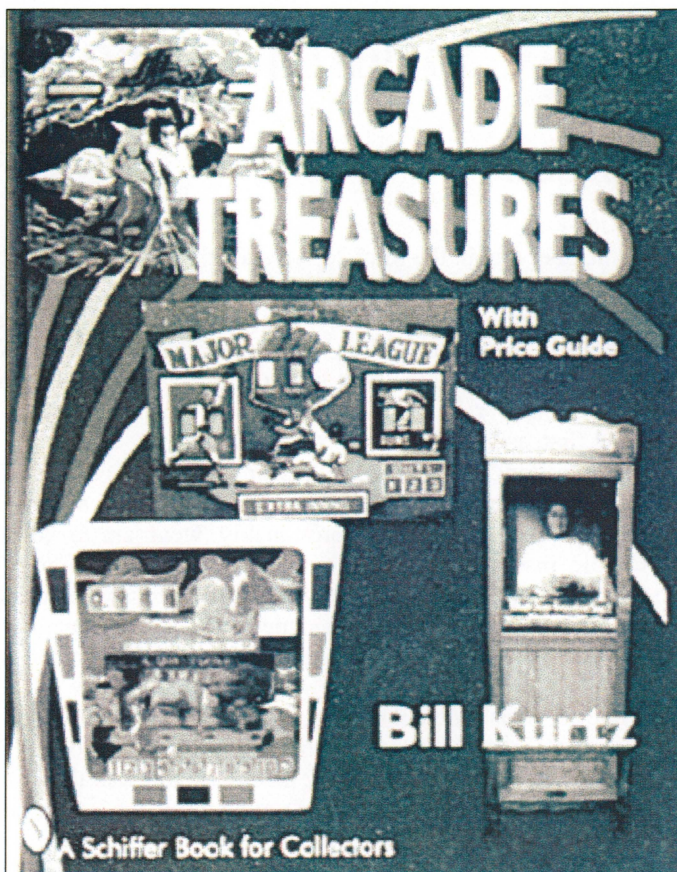
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No More Clowning Around

By Richard Goddard

Some of you may remember that in the May 2009 issue of MMM Jerry kindly printed an article about a burglary that occurred at our house, whereby a number of possessions were stolen, including my machines. I subsequently followed this up with an article in the September 2009 issue entitled 'The (not Bolland's) Burglar'. Well I am pleased to say that after three years, I am now fully re-united with one of those stolen machines: my Pessers Moody Wraith and Gurr Ltd Clown Catcher. I will elaborate on the word *fully* later but first, as they say.....the story so far.

Following the burglary in 2009 the police kept my wife Sally and I informed of all developments, of which unsurprisingly, there were very little and after five months they subsequently 'filed' the case, which presumably went on to form another numerical statistic. The insurance company were quite helpful as were the loss adjusters and we finally received a cheque a few months later for the loss of all the items that were stolen from our home. It was in some ways a bitter-sweet moment; we were now able to replace the stolen personal items but I knew that I could not just as easily purchase replacement slot machines.

I mentioned in the previous article that insurance companies insist that ownership must be proved for any stolen item to be claimed for. If it were not for the fact that I comprehensively photographed and recorded my machines and was therefore able to substantiate ownership beyond any doubt, I would not be writing this now because the information and photos also proved to be very useful again.

At the back end of 2011 I was browsing the Internet and saw a Clown Catcher for sale in a shop in Warwickshire. I thought, "nice machine, reminds me of my old stolen one." I looked a bit closer at the photos and to my amazement and racing heart beat, discovered it was indeed my stolen machine! I had kept a file on the burglary and therefore had a direct dial telephone number for the police who originally dealt with the case. With a mixture of elation, anticipation and apprehension I phoned the number and spoke with a police officer who actually remembered the burglary, owing to the machines being very unusual items (to him).

And then came the crunch question from the police, could I *prove* that this machine was in fact the one that was stolen? We discussed the numerous features of the machine and when I told him that I had photos and recorded certain numbers and details he was flabbergasted saying "Blimey we don't usually get that level of information." I immediately emailed my record photos of the machine to him and spoke again on the phone whereby he confirmed that in his opinion it was the same machine.

Great - first hurdle over, thanks to my records. That was at 6.30pm and at 8.00pm I received a call from the police officer to inform me that he had sent the photos and information on to his colleagues in Warwick and he was now in the process of making 'discrete' inquiries into the seller of my machine. Co-incidentally, Jerry had also seen the machine advertised and thoughtfully emailed me but at the time I was rather pre-occupied with the whole issue of the discovery and did not pick up Jerry's email until a few days later.



I went to bed that night with a feeling of uncertainty coupled with expectation, and was woken quite early in the morning by a phone call from the Warwickshire police seeking a few more bits of information - curiously efficient I thought with a sceptically 'open' view of what would be done now. I did not have long to wait. At about 11.00am I received another phone call from the Warwickshire police to inform me that my machine had been 'seized' and was now 100 miles away in a Warwickshire police station. Fantastic!

I wondered what the next step would be so phoned the PC that I dealt with on the previous evening. He told me that their 'discrete' enquiries had not revealed much, other than the seller appeared to be a bona-a-fide shop who seemed to have acquired the machine in good faith. However, there were still on-going enquiries but the machine would eventually be delivered to my local police station whereby it would be returned to me.

This posed an interesting question and one that raised a few comments on the pennymachines website under 'Stolen Machines' relating to: if the machines were to be found, would I be entitled to keep them? I put this question to the police and their official stance is that any stolen item that is recovered will be returned to the last rightful owner when stolen, in this case, myself. However, that also posed a further question: the insurance company had paid out on this machine and other stolen items so was the machine in fact theirs? I suspected it was. The police advice was that I should make contact with the insurance company and discuss the matter with them, as far as the police were concerned they wanted no involvement with the insurers; that issue was beyond their mandate and therefore completely down to me.

So, second hurdle out of the way, my machine was coming home - sometime. That 'sometime' took a number of months. I got home from work one day and there sitting in the lounge was my Clown! A welcome sight that I had not seen for three years. My wife Sally said that a policeman and WPC had called and dropped off the machine that afternoon. I called the PC to thank him and also to enquire whether there had been any further leads. He told me that enquiries had lead from Warwick to Leamington Spa to Leominster to.....etc etc, and then gone cold; the Clown had certainly been 'around'.

As you can imagine, I was extremely pleased and relieved to see it and to my surprise, when I opened its door, heaped on the base of the cabinet were over 120 dark brown old 1D penny coins. I suspect these were the very same pennies that were taken with the machine when stolen as they were all old Victorian, Edwardian and Georgian dates that I used on this machine. Also, the clown tokens were still in the payout tube! I thought, "*this gets better.*"

It was evident that the machine had been 'tinkered' with because for some reason the bell hammer was not working as it should when a win occurred. Following an examination of the mechanism I resolved the problem and also removed some awful grease that had been applied to areas of the mech, it all works perfectly now.

However, the third and final hurdle was still waiting for me - insurance company. A number of people had suggested that I just keep the machine and not inform the insurers but I felt uncomfortable about this. Call me old-fashioned but I always treat people the way I would like to be treated. So picking up my file, I made contact with the company. The phone was answered by a disinterested sounding girl, who was probably prodding her index finger at her iphone to communicate with her mates on facebook. I explained the situation and she said that she would transfer me to their 'Home Claims' department.

Having been put on hold and subjected to some awful electronic vomit masquerading as music, I was just about to give up the will to live when 'Stefan' from Home Claims cheerfully answered. I again explained the situation and he subsequently brought up my file on his screen and asked me a few 'searching' questions. He confirmed that as the company had paid out on my claim for this item it was now legally theirs and then said he would need to put me on hold whilst he discussed it with his line manager (oh no not again)! He returned within a short while and said, "Would you like to buy it back from us?" He explained that the insurance company had no use for it and it would cost them additional money to sell the machine. To cut a short story even shorter we agreed on a price and I subsequently sent off the cheque.

So I am now the legal owner of my old Clown Catcher again. However, there is a twist to the storey. About 18 months after the burglary, convinced that I would never see the machine again, I bought another Clown. It is very similar to the stolen one and about the same age but in a slightly better condition. It is not a PMWG, but has what looks like MWDL hot stamped on the side and I have not been able to find any reference to these initials. I assume it was a company/distributor. Any ideas?

As for what I shall do with my returned Clown I have yet to decide. It currently resides at one of our daughter's houses, whilst our other daughter keeps the MWDL Clown. One of the indelible scars of this whole burglary escapade is my fear (I know it's irrational) of losing a collection again and in consequence, my machines are no longer kept in our house or indeed all in one property.

If there is anything to be learned from this whole experience it is this: if you keep a collection of machines ensure that you protect them as much as is practical. I fitted a house alarm after the burglary; perhaps if we had one before, the machines would not have been taken. Keep a photographic record and all details of serial numbers etc. of all your machines. Also, ensure that your home insurance covers the value of your collection. Finally, if your are unfortunate enough to have any machines stolen, don't give up looking for them; you never know when they may turn up and yes I still constantly keep a look out for the remaining stolen machines – who knows, one day they may turn up!

Richard Goddard

Carters Steam Fair

By Graham Millard

I have just returned from a visit to Carter's Steam Fair at Boxmoor Common near Hemel Hempstead and can't help wondering if I'm the only one who thinks that the arcade is nowhere near up to the standard it was when John was alive? Each year I try to get there and each year I end up feeling disappointed that the machines are not maintained as they used to be.

This is what I found today.....Firstly, both machines that give out tokens were out of order. A ball was lying in a tube on an Earth Satellite due to the fact that the machine wasn't level and it wouldn't move, even when I tried to gently push the machine. Anyone putting a coin in would have not got a go. It's OK for us because we know and we see things differently but a friend who was with me never noticed.



Quite a few allwins had the ball hammer hitting the track and another had the ball there waiting for somebody to fire it around. I told my mate to flick the trigger and then I realised that the spring was so badly adjusted that the person before must have just given up. My mate did eventually manage to get it around and lose it. The Payramid, which used to have a few coins in the jackpot, was empty and I refuse to believe that someone had managed to catch eight balls! The trigger for the Hawtins was missing and then I saw it lying on top of the machine!

We played a couple of the bandits, I got a cherry on both but neither paid out so I thought I'd tell the chap, (noticing that from where I was standing whilst I was waiting to attract his attention, there were no locks on the backs and a 'do it yourself' job instantly crossed my mind)! When I did manage to talk to him he lifted one bandit up and banged it down, which did nothing. He looked at the other and gave me four coins. Out of the goodness of my heart (and not needing another trigger for my Hawtins) I told him to take the trigger from the top in case somebody nicked it. He told me the pin had come out. Diplomatically, I said nothing! I then tried one of the other bandits on the other side of the paybox and it was jammed. I did manage to retrieve the coin but he wasn't around so I left it.

The two giant Wonders worked really well, as I remember they did before but a lot of the others are in need of a general tidy up and I know they must take a hammering throughout the weeks. Whilst I was there the Laughing sailor and the Conveyor were being looked at probably due to the electrical connections. Well that's my theory.

As for the rest of the fair everything was good, the prices I thought were excellent and you can download a voucher which can be exchanged for 10 tickets giving 50p off vouchers for rides and even one for candy floss. This makes the prices generally £1.50 per ride. Meesham's Wall of Death was travelling with them and at £3 a show was pretty good value, although I particularly wanted to see Professor Voltini sideshow and they weren't with Carters on this occasion.

We also commented that the chrome on the dodgem cars would have benefited from a little polish. All the other rides look great in the sunshine and I would hate to guess how many people were taking pictures on their cameras and mobiles.

To conclude, Carters always seems to have 'a feel good factor' which to me is never about in other fairgrounds and judging by the families that were out in the sun today I think they must agree.

It would be interesting if anyone else shares my thoughts on the arcade.

Graham Millard

From Mission Impossible, to Merely Improbable

By John Peterson

Imagine for a minute that you are a British coin-op manufacturer in early 20th. Century England. You work in a small shop with mostly hand-operated tools. Your materials are often cast-off pieces from games of other manufacturers that have lost their customer appeal. Much of your mechanism will be handmade and individually fitted to the work in progress. Most if not all of your creations will number less than one hundred for a production run. The concept of mass production is unheard of. Every game is unique due to the large amount of hand labour that goes into each machine.

And those are just some of the production challenges. Added on top are the laws that seem intended to restrict your industry out of existence. Any game that smacks of gambling is subject to confiscation by the local constabulary. There are no clear-cut guidelines between the permissible games that are *for amusement only* and those that will be found to be illegal games of chance.

You launch your game into the marketplace and hope for the best, knowing that the public secretly loves games that reward a lucky player. Games *for amusement only* are for children. You want to pull money from the source: adult players. What do you do? One answer is here, the **Phoenix**, circa 1910. For provenance, I am relying on an almost identical machine that was sold in the Costa-Haskell collection auction by Christie's house in 2006. The only differences between their machine and mine are coin-play (Costa-Haskell is ½ penny, mine is the 1D penny); door shape, (Costa-Haskell has a rounded top cut-out whereas mine is 90 degrees), and my game has been re-cased. Other than those minor differences, the games are identical.

The game is a ball catcher. The concept is the same as the clown game 'Bajazzo,' but with a twist. Bajazzo gives the player one ball per coin. If the player successfully catches the ball in the clown's hat, they may then activate the payout mechanism and receive their prize, usually money or a token redeemable for prize or money.

With Phoenix, the bar is raised to an almost impossible level. For your coin, you receive four balls that you introduce onto the top of the playfield, one at a time. Using the movable shield, you must catch each ball as it falls through the pinfield. As each ball is captured, it falls into the reserve slot shown as the vertical slot at the bottom centre of the playfield. Three balls fill up this reserve cache and the fourth ball caught diverts to the mechanism that allows for activation of the payout knob. The payout, by the way, is one coin. You are playing to win back the coin required to play the game.

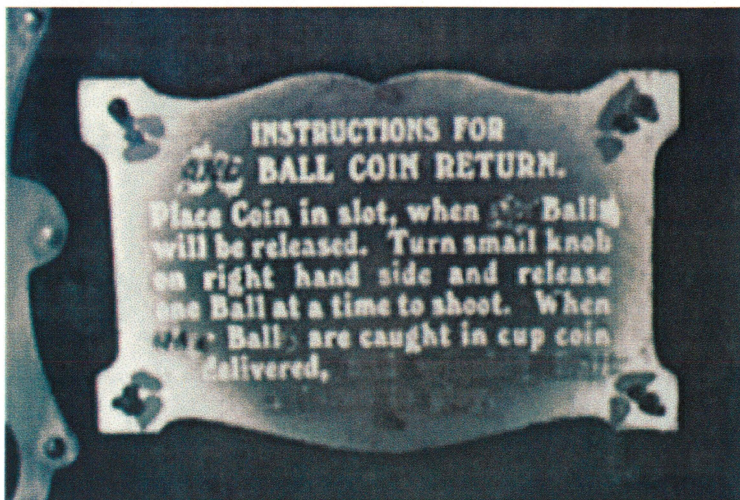
Since there is no manner in which players may increase their wealth with this game, it's a safe bet that Phoenix passed the *amusement only* test with flying colours.

The problem lies not with the law but with the play challenge. In order to get back your penny, you must catch **all four balls!** Catching one ball is difficult; catching all four is nigh on impossible. To make matters worse, the knob controlling the movement of the catching shield is backwards to the operation of all clown games. Think of it as driving a car where turning the steering wheel to the right causes the car to veer left. The player must ignore instinct and master the motion opposite to all other catcher games.

I think it safe to say that Phoenix was doomed from the start. Which is not to say that it remained a loser for all it's commercial life. Once in the arena, some enterprising operator modified the game to a more acceptable level of difficulty. To do so, he changed the game from a four ball challenge to a one ball version. With a clever modification, any ball caught bypasses the reserve slot and diverts directly to the payout mechanism allowing for return of the player's coin.



Changing the play necessitated changing the play card. The picture below is the new 'improved' rules. They state: "INSTRUCTIONS FOR ONE BALL COIN RETURN. Place Coin in slot, when Ball will be released. Turn small knob on right hand side and release one Ball at a time to shoot. When one Ball are caught in cup coin is delivered." Switching from plural to singular will get you every time, right? I'm just happy they didn't butcher the card any more than they did.



Here is how the original instructions read: "INSTRUCTIONS FOR FOUR BALL COIN RETURN. Place Coin in slot, when four balls will be released. Turn small knob on right hand side and release one Ball at a time to shoot. When four balls are caught in cup coin is delivered and winning Ball is returned for play." What the card neglects to say is that catching the 'winning Ball' a second time delivers nothing. Only one coin is trapped and available for payout. Once payout has been made, the bank is empty. Should you catch any successive balls after the first four in a row, you will have only the satisfaction of knowing that your skills are superior to all other punters.

Necessity is the mother of invention. Stated a different way, four balls are not always better than one. My Phoenix has now risen from the ashes. Restored to her former glory and sporting the ever-popular showman's paint, she is once again stealing pennies from children and making grown men weep. Step right up, folks, and take a flight on the Phoenix. You have nothing to lose but your innocence...and a penny.

John Peterson, USA

The House on the Hill

By Stuart Dale

Over the last few years, I have been touring the UK looking at the many vintage slot machine arcades and museums. My visit to the vintage arcade at the House on the Hill Toy Museum at Stansted Mountfitchet was long over due. So when Mrs Dale said why don't we pack a bag and go off for a few days, I decided to put it on the list of things to do.

The house on the hill toy museum is privately owned by father and son Alan & Jeremy Goldsmith and makes up part of the multi award winning Mountfitchet Castle heritage complex. It offers a great day out for all the family and not just us 'slot nuts'. The main part of the site offers you a chance to travel back in time to 1066 and see how life was lived in this accurately reconstructed Norman castle and village. You are free to roam in and out of the many houses and buildings contained inside the castle walls. You will see the blacksmith at work in his forge; the brewer in his brewery making wine for the lord of the manor and ale for the workers, *there are some things never change*. You also get the chance to pet and feed the many animals and birds that roam free in the castle grounds, these include ducks, chickens, peacocks, deer, goats and if you are very lucky, rabbits. Most are rescue animals that have been given a better home at the museum, so don't forget to take the kids – they will love it.



Once you have experienced the castle and village, which took us about an hour, you might be in need of some light refreshment; this can be found in the cafe in the main visitor centre. You will also find a well stocked gift shop, and along with the usual range of gifts you would expect to find at an attraction like this, there is also a good selection of genuine vintage toys and annuals for sale. Maybe you can find that one special toy that will take you back to your childhood?

Once refreshed, you exit the gift shop and make your way up the long and winding path towards the House on the Hill. You can't miss it; just follow the dinosaur footprints. On the way, you will pass the dinosaur enclosure with its many full sized models. When you do finally arrive at the museum's front door, you will know just why it is called the house on the hill, as a plaque on the wall tells you that you are now standing 250 feet above sea level. Once inside, you will see not only the 80,000+ vintage toys, books and games that span the last 100+ years, you will also be able to play on the many vintage slot machines that are displayed throughout the museum.



Sooty Band Show, Mutoscope and Laughing Sailor.

You will need to look around the whole building because just as you think you have seen all the machines, you turn a corner and find some more. Some of the machines are still on old penny play, others take the new 20p & 50p. You can get a ready supply of old pennies at the entrance to the museum.

Amongst the larger machines there is a B.A.N.Co Pussy Shooter with its distinctive red brick painted cabinet; a Novelty Merchantman crane piled high with treats just ready to be won; a Haunted Churchyard and an Executioner working models. There is one working model called Davey Jones Locker, which is attributed to Bolland. This machine looks as if it has been rebuilt into an old Dennison cabinet, but hey! This is what happened to lots of machines back in the day.



Davey Jones Locker, probably by Bolland in a Dennison case.

One machine that made me smile was a revamped Sidney Knows fortune teller, in which Sidney has been redressed in Saxon clothing and has been given a voice. The machine is now known as "Hear Sidney Sing" which I for one thought was an improvement on the regular machine.

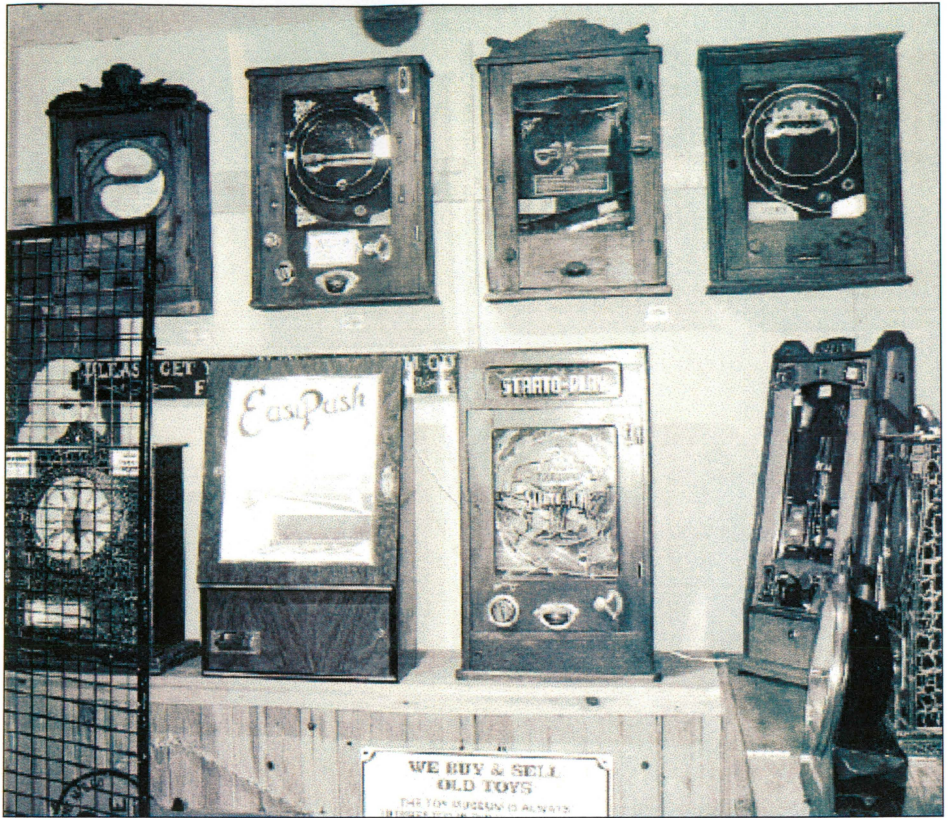
If you are an allwin collector, you will find a good selection of Oliver Whales machines on display, including: Easy Perm, U-Select It, Play Ball, Have a Go, Strato-Play and Jet-Play. It was also for me the first time I have seen and played an Ol-Win. For the Bryans fans they have: Worl Borl, Forks, Elevesnes, Allsport, Payramid, Clock and others. And if you want to see just what the butler did see, why not spend a penny on the Mutoscopes or the Peerless viewer?

I have listed a few of the vintage machines that are to be found and played at the House on the Hill, but there are lots more. So get yourself down there and see for yourself, you won't be disappointed.

Stuart Dale



A nice collection of Whales and Bryans allwins.



*Another nice display of wall machines, particularly those in the top row
(which obviously cannot be played).*

You will find the House on the Hill Museum at:
Mountfitchet Castle,
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Essex, CM24 8SP.

www.mountfitchetcastle.com

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Jerry 07710 285360
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Wanted

I have a few 1960/70s machines with Formica clad sides. As is often the case with these machines, pieces get chipped off the corners or small pieces just drop off and get lost. I was wondering if anyone can provide us with a supplier where small pieces of Formica, both plain and patterned, can be purchased to assist with restoration of this type of machine. If you can help please let us know.

Brian 01347 811532

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